

PR 121
Sermon #2
December 11, 1973
Ralph C. Link

"Happy New Year!"

Scripture: Matthew 28:1-10

Text: Matthew 28:1a, "Now after the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week," R.S.V.

Today is Easter Sunday. Yesterday, all day, and all night people were gathering in the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. They have been doing this for over nine centuries. These people have been taking part in what is called the "Ceremony of the Holy Fire." H. V. Morton tells of this in his book entitled "In His Steps." Hundreds of people sleep in the church. Thousands more wait outside all night for the supreme moment of the morning to come when the fire shall appear. They push and shove for places that will place them in a position to get their candles touched by the holy fire. The police are called in to preserve order, but to little or no avail.

On each side of the tomb are round openings rimmed with stone, blackened by the fire of other years. Runners stand around holding bunches of candles. The Greek and Armenian patriarchs take their places at the openings, each with a torch. Suddenly in the darkness a burst of flame appears and the torches are ablaze. There is a mad rush of shrieking candle holders as they push forward to light their candles. All pandemonium breaks loose. Out of the tomb they rush with the lit candles, and into their vehicles to drive to their churches and to place the candles in those churches. The church bells peal out their joyous notes on the early morning dawn air, while added to this is the strange noise of wooden gongs that are beaten with strips of metal.

This resembles very much our custom of watching and awaiting the

the arrival of the New Year. Each December 31st thousands of people sit in front of their TV sets viewing Guy Lombardo and his orchestra playing dance music, while people dance and await the New Year. Quite frequently, the scene changes and shows the time remaining until midnight. At a few minutes to midnight the scene in Times Square New York City is shown and at exactly midnight the ball drops to the bottom of the tower and all pandemonium breaks loose with people shouting, and whistling, screaming, embracing, and wishing one another a Happy New Year, to the accompaniment of horns and noise makers.

Well, today is a day of new beginnings and so let me be the first to wish all of you a Happy New Year. This is the day we have all awaited. This is the day to which we have looked ever since Ash Wednesday marked the start of Lent. This is the culmination of the blood, and sweat, and tears of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Today, He has arisen. He is no longer held captive in the tomb, but is alive.

A Moslem once remarked to a Christian missionary, "We have proof of the death of our prophet. When we go to Arabia we can find his tomb and thus show that he really lived. When you go to Jerusalem you cannot prove that he lived for you have no tomb." "True," replied the missionary, "We have no tomb in our religion because we have no corpse. Our Gospel ends not in a corpse, but in a conqueror."

Think of the impact this resurrection made upon the followers of Jesus. We read in our scripture how Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the tomb, "after the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week." Have you ever watched through the early morning hours and awaited the arrival of dawn? While I was in Korea very appropriately named "The Land of the Morning Calm," I stood guard many nights at the front lines, and watched the blackness of night give way to the beautiful light of dawn. To watch the sky slowly and gradually become light, and to see the first light of day is more breathtaking than I could ever possibly describe. This is literally what took place for these

two women. They saw the dawning of a new day, literally and figuratively. The early morning hours were for these women, moments of grief and sorrow. But they were hours in which they could at least strive to ease their grief, by going to the tomb and seeing where their beloved was entombed. Matthew tells us they went to see the sepulchre. We can well imagine their utter amazement at the events that took place, what with the earthquake and the stone being rolled away, and the angel to greet them. But it becomes all but impossible to imagine the surprise they must have felt when they first viewed the empty tomb. They certainly were not prepared for this shock. So it isn't too hard to understand why the angel told them not to be afraid, for fear was probably the first thing they experienced. A fear that the body of their beloved Jesus had been stolen, or carried elsewhere. But just imagine their joy as they are told the glorious news that He has arisen is now alive, forevermore.

This made that day dawn just that much brighter for them. What was once darkness, sadness, grief and despair, had now turned to a lightness and brightness that nothing could ever match. What made it all the more bright was for them to leave the empty tomb to tell the disciples of their discovery and to be met by none other than Jesus Himself. This not only made it believable, but here was the proof.

A minister named John Henry Jowett once told of a fellow minister when he said, "I know a man who always lights up the burial service by the wonderful way in which he reads the resurrection chapter in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. While he reads you can see and feel the morning dawning, even though you are in the house of the dead."

This is what the Easter story should do for all of us. It should create the new and glorious dawning. When God performed the miracle of resurrection, it was the beginning of a New Year for many. It is a New Year for all those who are in Christ. It is a day of

new life, of new birth.

A janitor was cleaning a church basement. He had hauled away load after load of old paint cans, and boxes, stones, scrap lumber and rubbish. He would have hauled out the old sofa that he found there, but it was too bulky and heavy to handle alone. So he pulled it over against one wall, and piled bags of leftover plaster, cement and sand on it. One day one of the ladies of the church came to the church and went to the basement to get something. She noticed that the basement was now nice and clean and during her inspection, she saw the old sofa sitting against the wall. She inquired of the janitor as to the ownership of it. He told her as far as he knew it belonged to the church. She replied that she would like to buy it. Scornfully he asked, "Yea, and just how much will you give for that old piece of junk?" She answered, "I'll give \$400 for it, because it just happens to be a French Chippendale." The janitor uncertain as to what he should do, told her he would check into it. He went to the pastor and told him. A furniture dealer was called in and after examining the sofa, told them it was worth some money. An auction was held and the sofa was sold for \$1000.

Thus it was with Jesus. The old worthless Jewish teacher had been disposed of. His body was laid in the tomb and for all intents and purposes he was just as dead as anyone else. The people who had wanted his ministry ended could now breathe a sigh of relief. The religious leaders were probably elated, because now this blasphemer was gone. His followers and disciples had all disappeared. Their hopes of being a part of the new order were dashed to pieces. All of that talk about tearing down the temple and rebuilding it in three days, had been just that, talk. Their leader had proven to be just as fallible as they. He was now dead and buried and his ministry was just a bunch of dreams and memories in the past.

But what no one considered was the fact that Jesus himself had predicted this. He had foretold that the stone which the builders would reject, would become the head of the corner. That old worthless body was gone, and it had been replaced with the new and glorious risen Saviour Jesus Christ.

The full significance of Easter is that Jesus conquered death and the grave and through Him we may have eternal life; it should be

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
BUTLER, PENNSYLVANIA

EASTER SUNDAY APRIL 14, 1974

THE REV. RALPH C. LINK, PASTOR
MRS. VELMA COLLINS - ORGANIST
MR. RALPH COOPER - CHOIR DIRECTOR
CHRIS CAMPBELL, GREG BOSKO - ACOLYTES

ORDER FOR 8:00 AND 11:00 COMMUNION

PRELUDE MUSIC: "THE RESURRECTION" JOHNSTON
"CHRIST AROSE" WILSON

SILENT PRAYER

- *PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 167 "CHRIST THE LORD IS RISEN TODAY"
- *ASCRIPTION - CHORAL AMEN
- *EXHORTATION
- *CONFESSION - No. 1, PAGE 4
- *KYRIE (CHOIR, CONGREGATION, PASTOR)
- *ASSURANCE OF PARDON (CHORAL AMEN)
- *PRAISE

*PASTOR - O LORD OPEN OUR LIPS.

*PEOPLE - AND OUR MOUTH SHALL SHOW FORTH THY PRAISE.

- *DOXOLOGY - No. 551

JUNIOR CHOIR: "ON WINGS OF LIVING LIGHT" BY R. C. WILSON
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MRS. CYNDIE SYBERT

SCRIPTURE LESSON: MATTHEW 28: 1-10

CHANCEL CHOIR: "WHY WEEPEST THOU? HE IS RISEN!"

SOLO - VON MALONEY, MARILYN STEPHENSON - PIANO.

SERMON: "HAPPY NEW YEAR"

- *GLORIA PATRI

*AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH (APOSTLES CREED)

- *CALL TO PRAYER

*PASTOR - THE LORD BE WITH YOU.

*PEOPLE - AND WITH THY SPIRIT

*PASTOR - LET US PRAY

- *PRAYER AND PRAYER RESPONSE

OFFERING

OFFERTORY "AT THE BREAK OF DAWN" MOORE

COMMUNION HYMN No. 341 "HERE, O MY LORD"

- *CALL TO COMMUNION - PAGE 32

- *EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

THE HOLY COMMUNION - (8:00 SERVICE - USHERS WILL ESCORT
YOU TO THE ALTAR

THE HOLY COMMUNION (11:00 SERVICE IN PEWS -

PLEASE RETAIN ELEMENTS AND COMMUNE WITH PASTOR)

- *PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING - CHORAL AMEN
- *HYMN OF DEDICATION No. 165 "THE DAY OF RESURRECTION"
- *BENEDICTION AND THREE-FOLD AMEN
- ORGAN POSTLUDE "ALLELULIA! ALLELULIA!"

----- *CONGREGATION STANDING -----
WE INVITE ALL CHRISTIANS REGARDLESS OF DENOMINATION,
TO PARTAKE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER WITH US.
PLEASE FILL OUT A COMMUNION CARD SO THAT OUR CHURCH'S
RECORDS ARE ACCURATE. YOU WILL FIND THEM IN THE
RECEPTACLE ON THE BACK OF THE PEWS.

IF VISITORS WILL PUT EITHER THE NAME AND ADDRESS OF
THEIR CHURCH, OR THEIR PASTOR ON THE BACK OF THE
COMMUNION CARD, IT WILL BE FORWARDED.

THE ELDERS AND DEACONS WILL SERVE AS USHERS TODAY.
ELDER AND MRS. PAUL CAMPBELL WILL REPRESENT COUNCIL
AT THE DOOR TODAY.

MRS. BARBARA VARGO AND MISS KAREN KENNEDY WILL BE IN
NURSERY TODAY.

HOSPITALIZED: MRS. BETTY FILSON - BOMH;
MR. GEORGE B. EICHORN - ALLEGHENY GENERAL HOSPITAL.

WE WISH TO CONGRATULATE MR. & MRS. GUY E. WILES ON
THEIR 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY. THEY WERE MARRIED
APRIL 16, 1924 BY REV. O. T. MOYER OF ST. PAUL'S UNITED
CHURCH OF CHRIST (REFORMED) OF SUGAR CREEK TWP.
ARMSTRONG CO. MRS. WILES HAS BEEN A PATIENT AT
SUNNYVIEW HOSPITAL SINCE AUGUST 1973.

IF YOU KNOW OF ANYONE WHO IS A SHUT-IN PLEASE CONTACT
THE PASTOR.

MONDAY - 7:30 - FIDELITY BIBLE CLASS

WEDNESDAY - 8:00 - GOLDEN CIRCLE

THURSDAY - 10:00 A.M. - MARY MARTHA CIRCLE WILL MEET
AT THE CHURCH FOR REHEARSAL.

THURS. - 7:00 - BUTLER COUNCIL OF CHURCHES MEETING -
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH.

THE ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY WAS 318

WE WELCOME ALL THOSE WHO VISIT WITH US TODAY IN THE
NAME OF THE RISEN LORD. WE HOPE YOU WILL SIGN OUR
GUEST REGISTER ON THE LEFT SIDE OF THE NAVE.

SUNRISE SERVICE - EASTER SUNDAY APRIL 3, 1994 - 7:00 A.M.
COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH - SAGAMORE, PA.

PRELUDE

GREETINGS/JOYS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

AKFAST AFTER SERVICE THIS MORNING, NO CHARGE - FREE-WILL
OFFERING IF CARE TO CONTRIBUTE
CHURCH SERVICE AT 9:30 FOLLOWING BREAKFAST
THE LORD'S SUPPER AT 9:30 SERVICE

ASCRPTION

CALL TO WORSHIP:

NOW IS CHRIST RISEN FROM THE DEAD, AND BECOME THE FIRST
FRUITS OF THEM THAT SLEPT.
THANKS BE TO GOD, WHO GIVETH US THE VICTORY
THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST!

*HYMN

OFFERING/PRAYER

*DOXOLOGY

MORNING PRAYER

HYMN

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 28:1-10

SERMON: "HAPPY NEW YEAR" - ST. PAUL'S, BUTLER 4/14/74

*HYMN

*BENEDICTION

*POSTLUDE

SCRIP: MT 28:1-10; SRM: "HAPPY NEW YEAR"

(ILWS CM OF HOLY SEPULCHRE, JERN & EASTER EVE & AWAIT EASTER DAWN)
SIMLAR PCWSTOM OF AWAIT NEW TRS DAY

THIS 1ST DAY NW BEGINS & LET ME B 1ST WISH W-HAPPY NEW YEAR

TH'S DAY LONG AWAIT IN HISTRY & SPECILY IN LIF JS XP

S CULMINATIN OF BLVD/SWMT/TEAR OUR SAVIOR JS XP

ME LNRHOLD CAPTIV IN TOMB-HE ALIV-HE IS RISEN

(ILWS MOSEEM & XPIAN MISSINARY ABOUT TOMBS)

VS 1-THINK IMPACT UPON TH/LIYS THEZ WOMN

HAY W EVR WATCHD THRU TH/ERLY MORN HRS & AWAIT ARIVL OF DAWN???

(ILWS STAND GARD KOREA -TH/LAND OF TH/MORNING CALM)

THEZ WOMN LITRLY/FIGURATIVLY SAW DAWN OF NW DAY

VSS 2-4-THINK IMPACT ON THEM, TH/SHOK, AMAZMENT

ANY FEARS THEY HAD WER QUICKLY PUT PREST BY ANGLS WORDS

VSS 5-7-THINK OF THIS TERIFIC NEWS THEY WER HEARING

NOW WUD IT AFFECT W?? JOY, WNSPKABL JOY

VS 8-I LIK HOW MT SAYS IT-"DEPARTED QUICKLY"

HE SAYS IT CORECTLY AT END OF VERSA&ND DID RUN"

BUT WHAT HAPPN AS GO PTEL DISCIPS???

VS 9-TH/DAY NOW DAWND THAT MUCH BRITR 4THEM

THEY CAM 2TOMB W/SADNES/DESPAIR & NOW GLWM TRVN 2JOY

(ILWS MINISTER WHO "LITES UP TH/BURIAL SERVICE")

THIS IS WAT EASTER STORY SHUD DO 4EACH OF VS

IT IS A DAY OF JOY OF NW BIRTH, OF HAY TREASVR WORL WANDTUDPLICAT

(ILWS OLD SOFA & TH/UNKNOWN VALVE OF IT)

THIS WAS JS

AN OLD/WORTHLES JEWISH TEACHER BIN DISPOD OF

HE WAS PUT 2DETH, BURIED & OUT OF HARM'S WAY

TH/RELIG LDERS & OTHERS WANT HIM OUT OF WAY BREATH SIGH RELIEF

THIS BLASHEMR WAS GON, & DISCIPS/FOLLOWRS HAD DISAPEARD

TALK OF NW ORDR, BILD TEMPL 3DAYS ETC WAS JWS TALK, TALK, TALK

LD DED, & HIS TALK JWS BUNCH DREAMS/MEMRIES IN TH/PAST

T FEL SIGNIF OF ALL THIS IS THAT JS RESVR MENT POSIBL THAT

HER IS A RESURECTIN & LIF BYON THIS ONE

4ALL BLIEVRS THIS SHUDE SORC JOY & THANKSGIV

IT SHUD PT VS 2WAT AWAIT VS AT CLOS THIS LIF

(ILWS MISSIONARY, FAMILT IN PORTUGAL & "ALL SAFELY HOME")

WAT A CAWS 4CELEBRATIN

JS MADE POSIB 2CROS FR/DARKNES 2DAWN

FR/DETH 2LIF, FR/OLD 2NEW

SO SHUDE "HAPPY NEW YEAR" THIS EASTER & EVRY EASTER

JS XP IS RISEN 2DAY, ALLELUIA & AMEN!!!

Shirley & Ralph Charles Link, Nancy Link, Dale with Lianne his wife, Lloyd Link with Karen his wife
Jessica in front of Ralph C. Link
Ethan and Alichia in front of R. Dale and Lianne Link (the eldest son & family)









Ralph C. Link
153 Keck Road
Sarver, Pa. 16055
(412) 352-1103

Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Married: December 15, 1951
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

SCHOOLING:

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

PASTORATES:

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United
Church of Christ

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.